

THE ROLE OF FORMULAIC LANGUAGE IN DEVELOPING THE COMPETENCE IN NATIVE SPEAKERS AND ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This article explores the concept of formulaic language from the intersecting perspectives of education, psycholinguistics, and corpus linguistics. It discusses extraction of pedagogically beneficial formulaic sequences for academic speech and writing, with a focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction. The study encompasses a series of experiments that investigate how specific features of formulaic language impact the comprehension and fluency of advanced L2 English learners and native English speakers. The analysis considers various metrics derived from corpora, such as length, frequency, and mutual information, revealing differential processing patterns across different populations. This has implications for the psycholinguistic validity of corpus-derived formulas, the learning model, the prioritization of formulas in ESL and EAP classrooms, and the pedagogical strategies for ESL and EAP instruction. In addition, the article discusses the consensus on the definition of formulaic language and its relevance in capturing native-like selection in L2 development, challenging the traditional delineation of language subsystems. Ultimately, the work sheds light on the complexities and cultural considerations involved in teaching and learning formulaic language in diverse linguistic contexts, portraying the challenges faced by ESL learners in understanding culturally specific expressions and metaphors.

Key words: Formulaic language, ESL, EAP, L2 learners, mutual information (MI), corpus linguistics, native speakers, formulaic sequence, learner's corpora / British National Corpora.

In natural language, recurring formulaic word patterns are common. This article triangulates the formula concept from the perspectives of education, psycholinguistics, and corpus linguistics. It discusses the corpus linguistic extraction of pedagogically advantageous formulaic sequences for academic speech and writing. It outlines teachers' perspectives on the pedagogical value of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction. The tasks for language processing were intended to represent a range of ecologically acceptable spoken and written production and comprehension abilities. Numerous metrics derived from corpora, such as length, frequency, and mutual information (MI), had an influence on processing across all experiments, but to variable degrees depending on the populations. For native speakers, the MI of the formula largely indicates process

ability; for non-native language learners, the frequency of the formula mostly determines process ability. These findings have consequences for (a) the psycholinguistic validity of corpus-derived formulas, (b) a model of their learning, (c) prioritizing which formulas to teach in ESL and EAP classrooms, and (d) ESL and EAP instruction.

There have been several scientific publications on formulaic language, as well as a wide range of linguists' perspectives on formulaemes or pieces of the vocabulary system. Surprisingly, scientists' perspectives include not just language definitions and explanations, but also psychological and physiological ones. To begin any study of formulaic language, basic foundations must be established, as well as the terminology used to refer to it, and a definition or definitions must be examined. Formulaic sequence is a term that typically refers to one such item, formulaic language is an uncountable noun that refers to similar things collectively, and phraseology is a term that frequently refers to the study of formulaic language.

According to W. Langacker, the following components appear to constitute the widespread consensus on a definition of formulaic language:

1. Multiple words
2. Be limited to a particular meaning or purpose
3. Be constructed or mentally stored and recalled, as if a single word

Such natural-sounding statements should be regarded as language units in their own right so that they may be utilized to capture native-like selection in L2 development. These expressions are frequently overlooked in L2 research and training because they cannot be simply characterized in terms of traditional language subsystems such as grammar, lexicon, and phraseology (Langacker 2008). Language is defined as an inventory of symbolic components with varying degrees of specificity in usage-based systems, with no rigid separation of grammar, lexicon, and phraseology.

"Speak of the devil" - this English idiom exemplifies the challenges ESL learners face in understanding culturally specific expressions. It requires contextual knowledge to comprehend the intended meaning. "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link" - this proverb underscores the importance of understanding cultural metaphors and analogies for ESL learners to develop communicative competence in English.

As A. Pawley and F. H. Syder pointed out, while there are numerous grammatically sound methods to represent a concept above the word level, only a few are favored choices among skilled users of the language (Pawley & Syder 1983). Native speakers can choose the proper word combination from the innumerable options provided by the language's historically established grammar and vocabulary (Daliyeva, 2020), whereas L2 learners frequently make the error of combining words in grammatically valid but awkward-sounding combinations.

Even among these several reasonable points of view, there is disagreement about which word sequences count as fixed chunks and which do not. This is due in part to the fact that chunks are an overlap between traditionally defined language subsystems such as morphology, lexicon, grammar, phraseology, and discourse, and in part because their defining characteristics (e.g. non-compositionality, fixedness, function) form a continuum rather than discrete categories (Temirova, 2024). Significant word sequences are universally accepted as fixed chunks because they are prototype examples of known categories; nevertheless, there is significant debate concerning word sequences that are at the extreme end of the distinctive feature continuum.

Corpus-derived frequency information is just a mirror of how language users utilize linguistic forms: conventionalized phrases are exchanged in a speech community, and the inventors of conventionalization are also language users. According to psycholinguistic studies, proficient native speakers are very sensitive to frequency of linguistic forms and "store probabilistic relations between words" (Ellis 2008). S. Wulff (2008) further shows that non-expert NS assessment of axiomativity is remarkably consistent. These findings are consistent with usage-based techniques in which frequency is important and leads to standardization. From my perspective, having a human's inner intuition may play a part in determining the expressions that are often employed among both native speakers and skill level users of language. Because they are multi-word phrases, the formulaic expressions may be difficult to identify in corpora.

From this research, English native speakers are more likely to use lexical chunks (bundles), collocations, idioms, and other speech patterns known as formulaic expressions (language). As a result, students must immerse themselves in formulaic idioms if they want to grasp the English language and sound like a real Londoner or American. In reality, many language learners struggle to develop formulaic statements, making their words sound strange and foreign to native English speakers. Formulaic language is critical since our fast-paced society is increasingly getting constructed by cutting and reducing words, even entire phrases and sentences. Conventionalized methods of stating things help to explain one's thoughts beyond word-level concepts, which many L2 learners find difficult, hence some of them utilize their L1 to say something in L2. This contributes to communication misunderstandings and a decline in L2 development.

By selecting topic-specific vocabulary for each topic and generating a specific context (conversation) during the L2 lesson, it is feasible to increase the learners' lexical resource and gather certain natural-sounding formulations (Satibaldiev, 2023). These phrases are very useful since learners do not have to adjust the structure of the speech formulae and can simply adapt them to their discussion. Furthermore, the frequency of these formulations may be observed in learner corpora / British National

Corpora. It can be concluded that formulaic set expressions are, in fact, beneficial for language learners, as this phenomenon assists to maintain a natural balanced conversation like native speakers of the target language.

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